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Harwich High School Government Students Conduct Primary Exit Poll

Government Students at Harwich High School conducted an exit poll at the Harwich Community Center between 7:30AM and 2:00 PM today. In all, they interviewed 189 voters. Their results show some strong local preferences in the races for Congress and the State Senate. We also asked a number of questions about issues and attitudes which offer some interesting insights.

The sample of Harwich voters we interviewed correctly predicted the overall outcome in three of four races we polled. Perry, Crocker, and Wolf won clearly, while the exception was the Democratic nomination for Congress, where O'Leary led our poll. Our results did match the official Harwich numbers quite closely.

There was good news in our poll for Democrats generally, in that the enthusiasm gap favoring Republicans widely reported nationally does not appear to exist in our district. Harwich is pretty even in party registrations, but in our poll Democrats outnumbered Republicans 3 to 2, and Independents chose more Democratic ballots 53% to 47%. Those that voted in the Democratic primary supported their candidates as strongly as those that voted Republican, and President Obama registered a 51% approval rate, which matched our exit poll in January. The official numbers at this hour with approximately 80% reporting shows that Democrats received more votes than the Republicans in the 10th District - approximately 55%-45% - while in January Scott Brown got nearly 60% of the vote here. All of this would seem to be a good sign for the Democratic nominees going into the general election.

Among the issues reported as important by our interviewees, there was a significant shift since our January poll. While the Economy and Health Care were the top two issues in both, their numbers reversed. In today's poll 61% cited the Economy as one of their top two issues, and 32% cited Health Care, while in January the numbers were 69% citing Health Care and 38% the Economy. The Economy issue was the strongest for Republicans and the weakest for Obama – only 41% of those citing it approve of his performance as president, perhaps a good indicator for Republicans should they be able to focus attention on it.

Our poll also showed the usual gender gap, with women about 10% more likely to take a Democratic ballot. Among women Republican voters, there was a much greater preference for Perry – approximately 90% to 10% in our small sample – this may have been important in Perry's primary victory.

Overall, our exit poll again yielded some accurate predictions and interesting analysis. We would like to thank all the Harwich voters who were willing to answer our students' questions, and especially Town Clerk Anita Doucette for the permission to conduct this civic exercise. As always, it was a great experience for the students,

John Dickson
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